

## SPIRITUAL ORDER

AND

## Christian Liberty,

PROVED

To be Consistent in the Churches of Christ,

AND

Impositions upon the Consciences of Believers in Religious Practices,

FOUND

To be Antichristian, and Destructive to both.

By R. G. A Protestant.

- Acts 2. 42. *And they continued in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship.* — Yet  
 Rom. 14. 5. 23. *Let every man be fully perswaded in his own Mind; for what is not of Faith is Sin.* — But —  
 1 Cor. 14. 10. *Let all things be done decently and in Order.* — Yet —  
 2 Cor. 1. 24. *Not that we have Dominion over your Faith.* — For —  
 2 Cor. 13. 10. *The Power given of the Lord to us, was not to Destruction, but to Edification.* — Therefore —  
 Gal. 5. 1. *Stand fast in the Liberty wherein Christ hath made you free, and be not again intangled with Yoaks of Bondage.* — Yet —  
 Gal. 5. 13. *Use not this Liberty for an occasion to the Flesh, but in Love serve one another.*

To the Christian Reader, whether Bound, or Free.

**C**ould I have satisfied my self in smothering this Discourse, it had not appeared in publick from me, now in this my retiredness from the noise of the many Debates about Rites and Ceremonies in Religion, which have so miserably rent and divided *Protestant Societies* in separate Communions, judging and condemning one another because of different outward Practices, and various apprehensions in debatable Questions; wherein, though they differ, each abounding in his own sense, yet they ought to continue as *One in the Lord*, though in several distinct Fellowships, and differing in *Outward Practices*. A But

But being alarmed with the loud clamour on the one hand of Church Government, Laws, and Orders of general and particular Meetings of the Friends of the Ministry, and others; the necessity of one or more in the Church, having power infallibly to determine all Matters controverted therein; to whom all must submit, though unconvinced, or unclear in themselves, or else be branded with the odious Names of Schismatick, Stragler, Breaker of the Unity of the Body, and many worse appellations, not worth the repeating. And on the other hand, with the Groans and Strugglings of a few, who have not defiled their Garments, but are wrestling for their Christian Liberty under different outward Practices against Impositions and introduced Innovations, contrary to that great Principle of Conviction and Choice, upon which all Christians were at first united in distinct Societies.

And that from among a People separating themselves from the Communion of all other Christians of what Denomination soever, upon the Principle of Immediate Inward Revelation of Light and Spirit, communicated to every man as he cometh into the World, for his Convincement and conduct in all things he is to believe and practice in Religion, and condemning in others an Imposing Ecclesiastical Power, as tyrannous and contrary to that Inward Revelation, they have so often asserted to be in every man, to lead him into all Truth.

I am constrained in my mind thus to appear in publick, testifying to that Spiritual Order and Christian Liberty established by the Apostles in the first Churches, and recorded in the New-Testament, as the only proper means for preserving any Christian Society from a confused, disorderly Licentiousness, and Tyrannous usurped Impositions.

I intend not by publishing this Discourse, to enter into a debate with any Person; being resolved, what ever entertainment it may meet with, to possess my Soul in Patience, committing the Issue to the Lord.

Neither would I be understood to be so engaged in any particular Company of Protestants, so as to plead for the one against the other: It is the first great Foundation Principle upon which the Protestants separated from those of the Roman Communion, that is here pleaded for, to wit, That the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures without us, and the Illumination of the Holy Spirit within us, gives final determination in Matters of Religion: Whereby every Christian for himself is restored to his Liberty of Inquiry & Choice, & so freed from the Imposition of unscriptural Traditions by Popes & General Councils.

Therefore what I am, matters not to this Discourse, and what others may judge me to be because of it, doth but little concern me; every man is to give an account of himself to God, and not he that commends himself, or is highly accounted of by others, but he whom the Lord commends, is approved.

FAREWELL.

*Spiritual Order and Christian Liberty, &c.*

THE Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ having received the Promise of the Father, and fitted with Power from on high, went forth Preaching the

the Gospel with great Power, giving Witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and Multitudes believed, and great Grace fell upon them all: They came not with outward Force upon the unbelieving World; neither did they magisterially, as by an unaccountable authority, impose upon Believers, Doctrines and Practises to be received by them, without inward convincement: Nay, nay, God who commanded Light to shine out of Darkness, shined in their Hearts; therefore they knowing the terrors of the Lord, persuaded men, they beseeched & prayed men to be reconciled to God, commending themselves in the sight of God, to every mans Conscience, by requiring every one in the Church to be fully persuaded in himself: Whereby they became manifest both to God, and in the Consciences of those that believed.

Whereupon the Disciples multiplying, first at Jerusalem, and afterwards in other Places, they were gathered into several distinct Congregations or Churches each distinct Congregation continuing together with one accord, abode steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, the care of whom was upon them, by whose Ministry they were first gathered, for their Establishment in their most Holy Faith: who therefore delivered to them, when present among them, and in Letters when absent from them, such Instructions, as (being observed) might preserve them (though in distinct Fellowships) as the Household of God, built upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the Chief Corner Stone, in the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace.

Hence we read in their Epistles these and such like Precepts; *I beseech you Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them: Be perfectly in the same Mind and in the same Judgment; I beseech you Brethren, be Followers of me; for this Cause have I sent Timotheus, who is faithful in the Lord, who will bring you in remembrance of my ways, as I teach everywhere, in every Church: Now I pray you Brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the Ordinances as I delivered them to you: Know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord; esteem them highly for their Works sake; exhort, rebuke with all authority; let no man despise thee; let all things be done decently, and in Order.*

Thus also the Apostles being guided by the unerring conduct of the Spirit of God, in discharge of the Ministry committed to them, whereof they gave sufficient Evidence, to the stopping the Mouthes of Gain-sayers, could with an infallable certainty preface their Determinations, in matters controverted in the Churches referred to them, *Viz. It seemeth good to the holy Ghost and to us:* which for any Person or Persons now to pretend to, by an alledged uninterrupted succession from the Apostles, or by a Revelation to that end, now in this Age received, without giving the like Evidence of their being so sent and conducted, is but a vain empty boast, to make void the certainty of the holy Scripture, thereby to establish in themselves an unscriptural Ecclesiastick Pre-eminence over all in the Church.

And as the Apostles were careful to establish the Spiritual Order of the Go-

spel in the Churches, they were no less careful to preserve their *Christian Liberty*, lest under the pretence of *Order*, it should be inroached upon by Church-Rulers, in whom the *Form of Words* might become stronger then the *Power of Godliness*; as after the *Apostles* dayes it indeed came to pass.

Hence we also find in the *New Testament*, Church-Rulers required, to be apt to teach, sober, patient in Meekness, instructing them that oppose; no Striker, no Railer, but in much forbearance to feed the Flock of God, not as Lords over Gods Heritage, but as Ensamples to the Flock; not as having Dominion over their Faith, but as helpers of their Joy: For (saith the Apostle) the Authority given us of the Lord, is not for Destruction, but for Edification. The Spiritual Authority intrusted of the Lord with Church Officers, is to reach the Consciences of all in the Church, to be manifest there; and not to exalt Man over the Consciences of the Disciples: Church-Rulers are not, because of their authority to force by Church-Orders or Laws, every one to submit to every particular appointment they judge necessary to be established in the Church: because Practices or Doctrines imposed upon Persons, to be believed and submitted to unconvinced, edifies not, but destroys the work of God in their Hearts: the true Ministers beareth with the Unclearness of the weak, waiting till their Submission to outward appointments be made necessary to them of the Lord, by inward Convincement: whereas the false Minister allows not unclearness in Dissenters, as an excuse for non-obedience, being satisfied in an outward, formal, bodily Compliance.

Those that are to be ruled in the Church, are also required in the *New Testament*, to submit to those that have Authority over them in the Lord, yet So, as every one is to be fully perswaded in his own Mind: Christs Government is to be exercised in the Hearts of his People; Truth is to carry with it conviction in the Conscience first, before it be submitted to outwardly: Matters of this kind are not to be taken upon trust; we are commanded to try the Spirits, whether they be of God or not, we are to examine Doctrines, to hold fast that which is good: Christs Sheep they hear his Voice, and follow him, a Strangers Voice they will not hear; they that are Christs, are led by the Spirit of Christ: this is the main thing in Religion: Persons are not to be hurried too hastily into the Practice of the decent Church-Orders, but are to wait on the Lord, to clear the matter to their Understandings: they are to do nothing of this kind doubtingly, but in clearness and Faith; for what is not of Faith, is Sin: an Error here, is an Error in the Foundation; because without Faith it is impossible to please God.

And further, that Church-Government might not degenerate into Tyranny, and to preserve *Christian-Liberty*, the Apostle tells us wherein the Unity of the Church consists: the great end of Government is to preserve Church-Unity, that there be no Schism in the Body: Christians are therefore required to be of one Mind, but in the Lord; their Unity is in the Spirit, not in an Uniformity of outward Practices. We find that in the first Churches they walked in different outward Practices, some observing a day, and some not observing



observing it; some eating, and some not eating, and that in one and the same Church; wherein they were commanded by the *Apostle Paul* (as a rule in such cases to all Christian Societies) not to *judge one another* because of them: whence it is manifest, that not outward different Practices breaks the *Spiritual Unity of the Church*, but *judging one another* because of them, he that observes a day, or other outward appointment in the Church, *doing it in the Lord*, may have unity with him that observes it not, *also in the Lord*: It was so in the *Apostles* times, and it will be so still, where GOD, and not Man, POWER, and not Form is exalted; for indeed the true ground of Unity among Christians; is not that such a Person is *conform* to me in outward Practices, but because I find him in what he doth differing from me, walking in his integrity, according to his own understanding in the Lord, and this is the stronger band of Unity betwixt us, then if we were both (without inward Convincement) in one uniform practice: nothing is more pleasant to behold in Christian Societies (while we see but in part, and every individual is to see for himself) then different sorts and sizes of Christians, every one in their own Station, learning their own Lessons from Christ, to whom they are to give an Account, and yet in their *different Practices*, having *Unity in the Lord* one with another: this is indeed lovely to a Spiritual Eye, though to the Carnal Eye it seems undecent and disorderly: Indeed *Uniformity* in a Christian Society is much to be desired; but the Lord is to be waited upon to bring People to this: Christianity was begun in the Spirit, and so it must be continued; nothing must be received by force of Church-Authority, or Arguments of mans Wisdom, but as by Convincement the Conscience is perswaded thereunto, where the Lord alone is to rule, who leads his People into the *Unity of the Spirit*, in the midst of *different outward Practices*.

Thus without forced or constrained Commentaries and Meanings, by repeating the very Words of the *New-Testament*, its manifest to him whom the Power of an outward Form of Words without Life, or the Ways of Unrighteousness hath not blinded, that both *Spiritual Order* and *Christian Liberty* were established by the *Apostles* in the first Churches.

Now that this *Spiritual Government* and *Christian Liberty* are consistent in one and the same Christian Society, necessarily follows beyond the reach of Contradiction, because it was so appointed by the *Apostles* in the first Churches; Secondly, because they walked in their Church-Fellowships in the practice of them, both which is already cleared: Neither can any man suppose either that the *Apostles* gave forth inconsistent and unpracticable Instructions to the Churches, or that even in their own time, while present among them, they were never practiced, though given forth, except he design to lessen their Authority in the Churches, or the divine Authority of the holy Scriptures, conveying to us the truth of these things, as I have already shewed.

But further, this *Spiritual Government* and *Christian Liberty* are not only consistent

consistent, and was accordingly practised in the first Churches, but it was also necessary that it should be so, because thereby the *Spiritual Unity and Peace* of the Churches is preserv'd, on the one hand from *Confusion*, on the other hand from *Tyranny*, all things being done *decently and in order*, and yet in *Charity*, and to *Edification*: therefore the *Apostle Paul* finding Divisions to be entered into the Church at *Corinth*, and to prevent the like at the Church at *Rome*, in his *Epistles* to those Churches, he leads them to the practice of this *Spiritual Government and Christian Liberty*, as the most proper remedy to recover and preserve them in the *Peace and Unity of the Gospel*, which he that will be at the pains to read, may perceive.

Indeed, under the *Old Covenant*, the Service thereof stood in Meats and Drinks, and divers Washings, observing Times and Days, and carnal Ordinances, until the time of the *Reformation*; but now that time being come, under the *New-Covenant*, wherein the Lord saith, *I will write my Laws in their Hearts*; in the Exercise of *Church-Government* among a People under that Dispensation, *Christian Liberty* is of absolute Necessity; the Law requiring Obedience, being not in Tables of Stone, but in their Hearts, they were to walk in the *Order of the Gospel*, through the *Convincement* of that *Law in their Hearts*; they were under.

And the necessity of the continuation of both these conjoynd together is also manifest, by the sad Consequences which have followed there, where *Church Government* hath been exalted on the Ruines of *Christian Liberty*: at this Door this *dark night of Apostacy* entred into the Church at the first, a *Mystery of Iniquity* that begun to work in the days of the *Apostles*, not by a *Demas* that forsook them, but by a *Deotrefhes* that sought Preheminence among them; for in the exercise of *Church-Government* in Christian Societies, had the *Apostles Rules of Expediency, Edification, Peace and Charity* (the best and only Preservatives of *Gospel Order and Unity*) been observed in all Ages by *Church Rulers*, the many *Schismes* that have rent and divided the *Churches of Christ*, had not entred: and when contrary to *Christian Liberty*, *Innovations* are imposed by *Church-Authority*, the *Dissenters* cannot in truth be reputed the Breakers of the *Churches Unity*, though accounted such by the Imposers. But the many *Schismes*, and the sad Consequences of them in any Christian Society, is then most justly laid to their charge, who being *Church Governors*, under the name of *Comely Orders*, impose *Unscriptural Traditions of the Elders*, as necessary Conditions of *Church-Communion*, upon the Consciences of the Disciples, unto which they are required to submit, though unclear, or unconvinced, as they would not be accounted Breakers of the *Unity of the Body*, and as such, be refused the *Spiritual Fellowship* of the *Church*.

Which kind of *Imposition*, as it is manifest by what is said already, to be contrary to the Doctrine of the *New-Testament*, and tenour of the *New-Covenant*; so it makes void the Foundation Principle of *Protestancy*, is contrary to *Right Reason*, really destructive both to the *Spiritual Order and Christian*

*Liberty*

*Liberty of the Gospel*, and last of all, is a direct contradiction to an *immediate inward Revelation of the Spirit*, as being a Rule to every particular Christian for his Conduct in all Religious Practices, and to that end implanted in every man as he comes into the World.

First, let the serious *Protestants* examine the first and great Foundation-Principle on which they founded their Separation from those of *Rome*; and they will find, that to assert the Divine Authority of the *Holy Scriptures without us*, and of the Illumination of the *Holy Spirit within us*; they protested that neither *Traditions, Councils, Popes, nor Canons of any visible Church, but the Scripture only, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, gives final Determination in Matters of Religion*. Which is so wholly at once made void by this kind of *Church-Imposition*, if allowed; that their *Protestation* becomes quite insignificant thereby.

Secondly, it is contrary to *Right Reason*, to allow of such an Imposition in a *Christian Society*; because all in such a Society are of one joynt voluntary *Communion*; it is therefore most unreasonable for one or more of that Society to impose their final determinations in matters controverted on their Brethren unconvinced, and not referred to them; in respect such Societies are to be governed according to their first Principle of Union, which is, *Inward Persuasion*, and therefore is to be upheld by that same Principle, lest it degenerate into *Tyranny*: Uniform Outward Practices they may be driven into, but they cannot be the *Bond* of their Spiritual Union; that being ever one and the same, whil'st outward Practices are alterable, so never to be imposed as necessary, but to be perswaded into, as they are found agreeable to the Rules of *Convenience, Edification, Peace and Charity*; It is Man's Glory, that he is not Religious by any kind of outward force, but that in his worshipping God, he offers up to him a free and reasonable Sacrifice; whereas this kind of *Church Power* once admitted, deprives Persons of the use of their Reason, who by submitting unconvinced, do give the Lye to their Understandings; in a word, it leaveth a man neither the use of his Reason as a Man, nor of his Spiritual Understanding as a *Christian*; and therefore cannot be of the God of Truth, that hath indued every man with a reasonable Soul, and every *Christian* with a Spiritual Understanding.

Thirdly, It is also destructive both to the *Spiritual Order* and *Christian Liberty of the Gospel*: this is sufficiently proved in the sad Example of those of *Rome*; where the many unnecessary and unscriptural *Traditions, Rites, and Ceremonies* imposed, have wholly extinguished the *Spiritual Order* of the Gospel mentioned in the *New-Testament*, and where the *Bloody Inquisition* hath buried *Christian Liberty*, and will infallibly produce the same event where it is received.

Lastly, The Contradiction betwixt this kind of *Imposition*, and an *Immediate Revelation of the Light and Spirit of God* in every individual, as his unerring Rule and Conduct in every thing of Religion is manifest in this, that this

*Inward*

*Inward Revelation* is asserted to be therefore given to every man as he cometh into the World, as being of it self sufficient (if obeyed) to lead him into all Truth, without any necessity of hearkning unto any outward Writings or Instructions whatsoever, but as this Light leads thereunto; which if it be so, and that a Society be united upon that Principle in one joynt Communion, the uselesness of one or more in the *Church* having such a Power, or of general or particular outward Laws and Instructions to order Matters in that Society, requiring Obedience thereunto: And of the fore appointed Standing Meetings, *Weekly, Monthly, and Quarterly*, and the frequenting the Set Times and Places of those Meetings, further than it becomes necessary to every individual Person of the Society, through the *Inward Immediate Revelation* of the Light in his own Particular then received, which he is to abide in, hearken unto, and obey, is so very manifest, that indeed it is a deserting the *Cause* of *Immediate Revelation*, once so fiercely contended for, to be in every Man, to lead him into all Truth; and on ~~the~~ acknowledgement of the Insufficiency of that Light within of it self, so to lead them in whom it is, or to preserve them therein.

It remains in order to the closing of this Discourse, to examine some of the arguments of old, mustered up by those of the *Roman Church* against the *Protestants*, and long since refuted by them, and manifest in their Consciences to have no force in them against this Doctrine of the *New Testament* treated of in this Discourse, yet now again raised out of that Rubbish, to uphold this little new erected Papacy.

*Is the Body to be without Government? And if so, will it not turn into the confusion of the Ranters, every one having liberty to do what he pleaseth? Is not this rather a Carnal Licentiousness than Christian Liberty?*

I answer, It is not pleaded for here, that every one, or indeed, any one should do what he pleaseth; but that none should be constrained, or imposed upon to do what others please, but they should be left free to do what God pleaseth; *They that are Christ's, are led by his Spirit; whose Conduct cannot introduce Confusion or Licentiousness, in them especially, who own the Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture as their Outward Rule: Indeed such things may enter into a Christian Society; but its only then, when the Doctrine of the New Testament, and the Leadings of God's Spirit according to them, is departed from.*

*But, are we not to believe as the True Church Believes? Is not the Infallible Spirit of God in his Church? If so, what will you believe, if not as the True Church doth believes?*

I answer, This is the old reasoning of Carnal Wisdom, whereby Christ is jostled out of his Office, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture trampled upon, to introduce an *Implicit Blind Obedience*; the strength of which Argument is at large solidly refuted, and the Deceit lurking under that Covering, clearly laid open, by *W. Pen a Protestant*, in his Book, entituled,



*An Address to Protestants*; the Perusal whereof is recommended to the People called *Quakers*, for their Information herein: 'I am (saith he.) to believe as the true Church believes; but not because she so believes, but because I am convinced in my Conscience of the truth of what she believes; otherwise my Faith may be false, though hers be true. We have the same Rule for our Faith the true Church hath, and the same Reasons to induce us to believe, that she hath; the whole multitude of the Believers, who make up the whole Church, having the same Rule of Faith with me in particular; therefore I believe as the whole Church believes, but upon the same Principles and Motives upon which every one in particular believed, who first made up a Christian Church, which was *Conviction* and *Choice*: and though I ought thus to believe, as the Holy *Catholick Church* believes, and that the Spirit of God rests in his *Catholick Church*, yet I am not therefore blindly, without examination and convincement, to give up my whole Concern *Temporal* and *Spiritual* unto any particular Society of *Christians*, even though I be engaged as one among them in *Church-Fellowship*, as unto the Judgment of the Spirit of God in the *Men's* or *Womens-Meetings*; the generality among whom may be in a Decay, and the *Dissenters* may be the few who keep their Garments undefiled, as most ordinarily in ages past it hath happened actually to be in other *Christian Societies*.

Obj. *But was there not a Government in the Churches in the Apostles Days? And were there not Governours, and Governed? And should it not be so still? Were not the Elders to feed the Flock, and rule over them; and was not the Flock, to submit themselves to them, and to follow their Faith, as they that must give an account of their Souls? And it was not Tyranny then to exercise this Authority in the Church, how comes it to be so now?*

I answer, *Church-Government* is *Spiritual*, and only to be exercised *Spiritually* in the Consciences of the Governed, not as Lording it over their Consciences by an *Ecclesiastick Jurisdiction*, but by *Perswasion* and *Conviction* to become manifest in their Consciences, waiting till the Lord shall reveal it to them: thus was *Spiritual Government* exercised in the first Churches by their Governours, according to the Rules of *Expediency*, *Edification*, *Peace* and *Charity*, and thus did the Governed submit themselves in the Lord, whereby they were preserved in the Unity of the Spirit in different Outward Practices; which being departed from, the Government becomes *Tyrannous*.

Obj. *But the infallible Judgment, in reference to Differences in the Church, though it be fixed in the Spirit of God according to the Testimony of the Scriptures, ought it not to be exercised by one, or more, certain Person, or Persons, in the General Meetings of the Elders of the Body, so long as he or they abide in the Conduct of that Spirit, and are not in a Decay? And what can be the hazard to say,*

*That in such a Church there is still an Infallible Judgment in one or more so guided, to whom all are to submit? In respect we are not to imagine, that in a Christian Society there must be no Orders made or executed for the better regulating of the Society, or that among them, Matters controverted shall never be finally determined.*

I answer, In such a Society, Matters controverted, may and ought to be finally determined by Persons of the Society, to whom they should be referred: and it rests in the power of any one particular Church to make Orders for the better Governing of the Church; the Exercise whereof may be committed by the Church to particular Elders and Overseers, to whom in their acts of Government they are accountable: but in the framing such Orders, and in the Exercise of Church-Government, the Rules of Expediency, Edification, Peace and Charity are ever to be observed, that the Consciences of the Disciples may be preserved tender under the feeling of *Christ's Government within them*, that Obedience be never imposed as necessary upon them, but as the Lord shall clear the Matter to them: for this being departed from, it ceaseth to be the *Spiritual Government* of Christ, exercised in his Church according to the *New Testament*, and becomes an *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction* usurped, and tyrannously exercised over the Consciences of the Disciples: So that in any particular Church, there is no necessity of any Person, or Persons, one or more, Pope or General Council's having such a Power, though Builders in Babylon would make it necessary, for preserving in themselves an Ecclesiastical Supremacy over the Scriptures and the Consciences of all in the Church: the hazard of which Doctrine is manifest in the *Apostacy* of those of Rome, from the Truth and Order of the Gospel upon this very Principle, an *External Judge in the Church*, one or more to have an *Infallible Judgment*, to whom all are to submit, though unconvinced; the admitting whereof in any *Christian Church* is the readiest way I know of to make void their great Principle of Union, Conviction and Choice, and to introduce the necessity of an *Implicit Obedience* to all manner of Innovations Church-Rulers shall please to impose, without a possibility in the whole Church to remedy it: For to add,

*So long as he or they abide in the Conduct of that Spirit in their own particular, and so not in a Decay:*

Is no more than what they of Rome assert of themselves; and the great question here remains undetermined, *Viz.* Who shall be Judge of the Life or Decay of this one or more? Whether the Pope and the Council of Trent, or the *Dissenting Protestants*? The very assuming such a Power in themselves at Trent, was a sufficient evidence in the Consciences of *Dissenting Protestants*, of their Decay then, and it is so now.

Obj. But if there be no infallible Judgment to be expected now in the Church, how are these words of our Lord's to be understood, Lo I am with you to the end of the

the World, the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it ? *And how is the Church the Ground and Pillar of Truth ?*

*I Answer,* The necessity of this infallible Judgment in one, or more in the Church, can no more be concluded from these words, than the Pope's Supremacy over Emperours and Kings, and the whole *Catholic Church*, from the words of our Lord to *Peter, Feed my Sheep* : These Expressions in plainness importing only this ; That Jesus Christ will be so present with his *Holy Catholic Church* in the World so long as it shall last, that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, so as in it the truth of the Gospel shall be preserved and professed : which is not applicable to any one particular Church ; for many that were such in the days of the Apostles, are long since so far prevailed upon, by Heresies, Persecutions, and Devastations, that they have lost, not only a Church-State according to the Order of the Gospel, but also their very Being in the World, yet Christ's Presence remains with his Church, so as it continues in the World, the Ground and Pillar of Truth, against which the Powers of Darkness shall never so far prevail, so as it shall not have a Being in the World, or shall cease to be the Ground and Pillar of Truth.

*Obj. But if there be no Infallible Judgment now to be expected in the Church, will not both the Dissenters, & they that are dissented from, be in the Mist, both hitting at Random ? And will not Religion degenerate into Scepticism ?*

*I Answer,* There is no such hazard, where the Divine Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, and the Illumination of the *Holy Spirit* of God in the understanding of them, is owned and preserved : and where People are called upon not to imbrace outward Appointments too hastily, but wait the Conduct of the Spirit of the Lord to lead into all Truth according to the Scriptures ; and this can never be the necessary consequence of this Doctrine, however these *Matters of Order* would impose such an Inference upon it : but we do indeed then hit at random, and are in the mist, blindfolded, when being denied the use of our Reason and Spiritual Understanding, we are required to submit to outward Impositions ; to be first blindfolded, and then led by such blind Guides, is the shortest way I know of, to fall into the Ditch.

*Obj. But if any through uncleanness or disobedience, do not submit, is not the Church to deny them her Spiritual Fellowship ? If in Civil Corporations or Societies they have power to declare the Breakers of the Fundamental Articles of their Society, to have forfeited their Right in the Society, why should it not be so in Christian Societies, without the brand of Tyranny ?*

*I Answer,* The chiefest Liberty pleaded for in this Discourse, is not on their behalf who break the Fundamental Spiritual Band of the Churches Unity, which is the Spirit of God by Conviction and Choice uniting them together in

one voluntary joynt Communion; neither is it pleaded for on their behalf, who break the Fundamental Articles of a *Christian Society*, as such, to wit, those who walk scandalously in a disordered prophane Conversation, unsuitable to the Holiness of the Gospel, and those who avowedly maintain, and obstinately adhere unto those damnable Heresies, as are manifestly inconsistent with the very Fundamental Principles of the *Christian Faith*, from all such as having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof, and as having erred concerning the Truth, overthrowing the Faith of some, in the Apostles days the *Christians* were to turn from; and it ought to be so now in all *Christian Societies*, walking according to that Pattern, as is clear in the *New-Testament*.

But if Persons make *Outward Bands* of Church-Unity as necessary Conditions of *Church Communion*, which was not in the first Churches, and impose them contrary to the Apostles Rules of *Expediency, Edification, Peace and Charity*, obliging all persons in the Church, notwithstanding any unlearnedness in themselves, to a submissive obedience thereunto, as unto the Judgment of the Spirit of God in the *Men's and Women's Meetings*, or be denied the Spiritual Fellowship of the Church: In this Case, the standing fast to *Christian Liberty*, not to be subject to *Ordinances after the Commandments and Doctrines of Men*, is no breach of the Fundamental Articles of a *Christian Society*, but a necessary Testimony against *Introduced Innovations*, contrary to them: for in any *Christian Congregation, or Church*, though there be not an Uniformity in *Outward Practices*, because of unlearnedness in the Consciences of the Disciples, in matters that are not plainly manifest to them all, to be of that weight as utterly to dissolve the Spiritual Union, and break the Fundamental Articles of all *Christian Societies*, as such, the Congregation, or Church is not to deny the *Dissenters* her Spiritual Fellowship: *Christian Liberty* was thus allowed of in the first Churches, and will be so still, where *Church Government* is not turned into *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction* in the hands of a few Church-Rulers, to uphold their Authority over all in the Church.

Neither are *Christian Societies* like other *Corporations*, because not gathered on the same Grounds; nor being gathered, & preserved by the same Principles, nor governed by the same Methods: the ground of their being gathered in *Societies*, is, their being first joyned to the Lord by his Grace in their Hearts, and then a voluntary joyning together for their mutual Edification in the holy things of the Gospel: this Principle which first united them, and that only preserves them in one joynt Body, in the exercise of that *Spiritual Government*, that is consistent with *Christian Liberty* in different *Outward Practices*: which Principle of Union, and Method of Government, no Civil *Corporations* pretend to.

Many more are the Cavils and Clamours that are raised by *Babylon's Builders* against this Doctrine treated of in this Discourse, which are easily confuted by such as will consult the *New Testament*; from the plainness and simplicity whereof, some *Men of Learning, & Masters of Sects* in their deep Wisdom find-



finding it their Interest, to depart, making indeed a show of *Wisdom in Will-Worship, and Humility*, and neglecting of the Body, have intangled themselves in many *Inventions*, beginning even in the *Apostles Days*; so early did the *Mystery of Iniquity in the Churches* begin to work; at first indeed under a *Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof*; which once being departed from, by degrees they come to make Shipwrack, both of Faith, and Order of the Gospel, as it was at first delivered by the Saints.

In which Apostatized State, the *Church-Rulers* puffed up with Pride and covetousness, never rested until by crafty, sinister, and wicked means, they had established in themselves an *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Supremacy* over Emperours and Kings, and the Consciences of all Persons in (as they pretended) the whole *Catholick Church*; whereby under the Names of *Church, Ministry, Ordinances, and Order* thereof, the true *Church-State, Spiritual Order, true Ministry, and Ordinances* of it were quite lost, and the Image of those things, in a Carnal, Worldly, Politick, Ecclesiastical *Church-State*, erected in the stead thereof: against which in several times and seasons, as it pleased God, he raised up faithful Witnesses, who sealed their testimony against some or other of these introduced Abominations with their Blood: after whom others arose through their Ministry and Sufferings, who running too hastily in their own Wisdoms to build up the *Ruines of Zion*, out of the *Rubbish of Babylon* (which, as accursed stuff, should have been utterly rejected) God in his infinite Wisdom divided them in their understandings; so that instead of Building one uniform Ecclesiastick Structure after the Pattern of that of *Rome*, they were scattered into several Parties and Sects, each pitching a Tabernacle for themselves, and confining God to their Way, or Party.

Among whom here is a sad Instance of them, who having condemned this kind of Imposition as *Babylonish* and *Antichristian* in others, are nevertheless casting after the same Copy: yea, behold here the very same Persons, testifying of themselves, that they were raised as Instruments in God's hands, to gather his People out of *Babylon*, out of the many divided Sects in *Christendom*, have fixed themselves in one particular Sect, bounded by, and limited unto outward Observances, and thereby established in themselves Preheminence over all their *Little Flock*, who, altho they have no authority from the Scriptures, nor the Law of the Nation, yet burden their Consciences with unscriptural Inventions, under the pretence of the *Comely and Decent Orders of the Church*; being deluded with this Errour, that they, and they only of that particular Company and Denomination, are the only true Church and People of God, and that there is no further Dispensation of Light to be expected from the Lord, in bringing his People out of *Babylon*, than that measure they are settled under; hence boldly judging all others, (not having their *Outward Mark in their Foreheads*) as out of the Truth; as if any further appearance of God in his People were to be avoided as *New Light*, which thereby they become tempted to resist and oppose: not considering that

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whatever Outward Dispensation of Light God hath once gloriously appeared in, yet he is not limited thereby: the Life of God in every outward Administration is one and the same, the administration being but the Outward Garment that he chuseth and refuseth at his pleasure; gathering his People, not out of one Sect, or Path only, but out of various Administrations into himself, *who is Love*, and in his Love comprehending all the upright hearted, however distinguished from one another; who therefore cannot be tied to any one Form; the Form being for ever to be subject to the Power of God in its various appearances: there is therefore no certain knowing of the power of Godliness by any outward Form it hath manifestly once appeared in; the outward Form being to be known and owned, as the Power manifests it self in and through it; and this the Lord doth, that no Flesh may glory in his Presence; that *God alone, and not Man*, may be exalted in delivering his People out of all the streets of that great City Babylon.

I shall conclude this Discourse with the words of our Lord to his Disciples in a day when a *Lofty Spirit* was exalting it self in some of them; which he excludes out of his Church, to have no place in his Ministers; *Mat. 20. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Lordship upon them: but it shall not be so among you; whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be Chief among you, let him be your Servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*

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THE END.

# Postscript.

**T**HE Writing bereof did ease and lighten my Mind very much ; and I have Peace in casting in my Mite in behalf of Zion's Friends, against the Builders of Babylon, whose Spirit, under various Disguises, God hath in Mercy revealed to me, and made me a Witness against the appearance of this Beast ( fore prophesied of, and rightly described in the Spirit by the Apostle John, Rev. 13. from the 11th. verse to the end of that Chapter ) among the Quakers, under the Government and Order of ——— in the year 1663 : at which time I foresaw what is brought forth among them, and now known to the sad Experience of many precious Souls under that Denomination : and I expect no other Measure ; for if our Lord was judged and rejected by the ~~Sett~~-Masters and ~~Form~~-Builders in the Days of his Ministry, for not observing the Traditions of the Elders ; what can those of his Family look for from Opposers and Gainsayers in this day, brought under the Power of Forms and Outward Observances, as the Band of their Church-Communion, since it was ever, and will be so in all Generations, the Sons of the BOND-Woman will judge and persecute the Children of the FREE-Woman ; but I rest satisfied in the Will of the Lord, waiting the day of Zion's Redemption, when the scattered of the Lord's Flock through many Outward Forms, shall be brought under the Power of that one great Gospel Truth, That the Union of the whole Israel of God walking under various Outward Practices, because of different apprehensions, is in the Lord only, in whom they are one, even then, when they are found in different Observances about Outward Circumstances.

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Note, Reader, this above *Postscript* was not annexed to the Discourse, but is part of a Letter to a Friend ; who apprehending it might be of Service to many of the scattered Ones of the true Fold ( who are despised and rejected by the Proud and Self-Righteous Pharisees, the *Self-Masters* of this PEOPLE ) hath therefore inserted it.

**F I N I S.**